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JULIAN OF NORWICH
SHOWINGS

TRANSLATED FROM THE CRITICAL TEXT
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
EDMUND COLLEDGE,O.S.A.
AND
JAMES WALSH,S.J.

PREFACE BY
JEAN LECLERCQ, O.S.B.

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Cover Art:
The artist, POMONA HALLENBECK is a native of the southwest. Pomona now lives in New York City and teaches at schools and workshops in New York, Texas, New Mexico and Canada. She also does textile designs and multimedia education materials. Of her cover for *Julian of Norwich*, she explains: "During a critical illness in her 30th year, Julian encountered the devil . . . Death. During this confrontation, the awareness came that there was no death . . . that Love flowed through even that seeming experience . . . there was no separation. The vision of the Passion as she experienced it at this time revealed that an all-embracing Love controlled, healed, strengthened, and enlightened. Love was the Source, the Energy, the Joy. The vision clarified for her the Divine Christ in us all, no matter how we perceive ourselves . . . that is part of our very existence . . . undeniable.

"Therefore, through the illumination of the cross, the Passion of the Christ Jesus, the cruciform halo Julian sees/perceives the past, the present and the future through the Christ-ness of her own Be-ing . . . beyond the human frailty of what *seems*, through the revelation of the Passion via her own soul. The all-pervading care and protection of the loved encompasses her own consciousness as a Constant. Ultimately, Julian presents us with the immediacy of the Christ *Within*. The crucified Christ becomes the channel for communication with that Source of Perfection which is our Heritage."

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in this fashion: Ah, Lord Jesus, king of bliss, how shall I be comforted, who will tell me and teach me what I need to know, if I cannot at this time see it in you?

The Fifty-First Chapter

And then our courteous Lord answered very mysteriously, by revealing a wonderful example[232] of a lord who has a servant, and gave me sight for the understanding of them both. The vision was shown doubly with respect to the lord, and the vision was shown doubly with respect to the servant. One part was shown spiritually, in a bodily likeness. The other part was shown more spiritually, without bodily likeness. So, for the first, I saw two persons in bodily likeness, that is to say a lord and a servant; and with that God gave me spiritual understanding. The lord sits in state, in rest and in peace. The servant stands before his lord, respectfully, ready to do his lord's will. The lord looks on his servant very lovingly and sweetly and mildly. He sends him to a certain place to do his will. Not only does the servant go, but he dashes off and runs at great speed, loving to do his lord's will. And soon he falls into a dell and is greatly injured; and then he groans and moans and tosses about and writhes, but he cannot rise or help himself in any way. And of all this, the greatest hurt which I saw him in was lack of consolation, for he could not turn his face to look on his loving lord, who was very close to him, in whom is all consolation; but like a man who was for the time extremely feeble and foolish, he paid heed to his feelings and his continuing distress, in which distress he suffered seven great pains. The first was the severe bruising which he took in his fall, which gave him great pain. The second was the clumsiness of his body. The third was the weakness which

232. See p. 257, note 222.

followed these two. The fourth was that he was blinded in his reason and perplexed in his mind, so much so that he had almost forgotten his own love. The fifth was that he could not rise. The sixth was the pain most astonishing to me, and that was that he lay alone. I looked all around and searched, and far and near, high and low, I saw no help for him. The seventh was that the place in which he lay was narrow and comfortless and distressful.

I was amazed that this servant could so meekly suffer all this woe; and I looked carefully to know if I could detect any fault in him, or if the lord would impute to him any kind of blame; and truly none was seen, for the only cause of his falling was his good will and his great desire. And in spirit he was as prompt and as good as he was when he stood before his lord, ready to do his will.

And all this time his loving lord looks on him most tenderly, and now with a double aspect, one outward, very meekly and mildly, with great compassion and pity, and this belonged to the first part; the other was inward, more spiritual, and this was shown with a direction of my understanding towards the lord, and I was brought again[233] to see how greatly he rejoiced over the honourable rest and nobility which by his plentiful grace he wishes for his servant and will bring him to. And this belonged to the second vision[234]. And now my understanding was led back to the first, keeping both in mind.

Then this courteous lord said this: See my beloved servant, what harm and injuries he has had and accepted in my service for my love, yes, and for his good will. Is it not reasonable that I should reward him for his fright and his fear, his hurt and his injuries and all his woe? And furthermore, is it not proper for me to give him a gift, better

233. This perhaps refers to Revelation IX, chapter 22, where Julian describes how her understanding was lifted up into heaven. On this difficult passage (which defeated the SS scribes) see *Showings*, II, 517 note 42.

234. That is, the second 'part' of it.

for him and more honourable than his own health could have been? Otherwise, it seems to me that I should be ungracious.

And in this an inward spiritual revelation of the lord's meaning descended into my soul, in which I saw that this must necessarily be the case, that his great goodness and his own honour require that his beloved servant, whom he loved so much, should be highly and blessedly rewarded forever, above what he would have been if he had not fallen, yes, and so much that his falling and all the woe that he received from it will be turned into high, surpassing honour and endless bliss.

And at this point the example which had been shown vanished, and our good Lord led my understanding on to the end of what was to be seen and shown in the revelation. But despite this leading on, the wonder of the example never left me, for it seemed to me that it had been given as an answer to my petition. And yet at that time I could not understand it fully or be comforted. For in the servant, who was shown for Adam, as I shall say, I saw many different characteristics which could in no way be attributed to Adam, that one man; and so at that time I relied greatly on three insights, for the complete understanding of that wonderful example was not at that time given to me. The secrets of the revelation were deeply hidden in this mysterious example; and despite this I saw and understood that every showing is full of secrets. And therefore I must now tell of three attributes through which I have been somewhat consoled.

The first is the beginning of the teaching which I understood from it at the time. The second is the inward instruction which I have understood from it since. The third is all the whole revelation from the beginning to the end, which our Lord God of his goodness freely and often brings before the eyes of my understanding. And these three are so unified, as I understand it, that I cannot and may not separate them. And by these three as one I have instruction

by which I ought to believe and trust that our Lord God, that out of the same goodness and for the same purpose as he revealed it, by the same goodness and for the same purpose will make it clear to us when it is his will.

For twenty years after the time of the revelation except for three months, I received an inward instruction, and it was this: You ought to take heed to all the attributes, divine and human[235], which were revealed in the example, though this may seem to you mysterious and ambiguous. I willingly agreed with a great desire, seeing inwardly with great care all the details and the characteristics which were at that time revealed, so far as my intelligence and understanding will serve, beginning with when I looked at the lord and the servant, at how the lord was sitting and the place where he sat, and the colour of his clothing and how it was made, and his outward appearance and his inward nobility and goodness; and the demeanour of the servant as he stood, and the place where and how, and his fashion of clothing, the colour and the shape, his outward behaviour and his inward goodness and willingness. I understood that the lord who sat in state in rest and peace is God. I understood that the servant who stood before him was shown for Adam, that is to say, one man was shown at that time and his fall, so as to make it understood how God regards all men and their falling. For in the sight of God all men are one man, and one man is all men. This man was injured in his powers and made most feeble, and in his understanding he was amazed, because he was diverted from looking on his lord, but his will was preserved in God's sight. I saw the lord[236] commend and approve him for his will, but he himself was blinded and hindered from knowing this will. And this is a great sorrow and a cruel suffering to him, for he neither sees clearly his loving lord, who is so meek and mild to him, nor

235. Literally, 'to all the properties and the conditions'; see *Showings*, II, 520 and note 88.

236. 'Our Lord', that is, God the Father.

does he truly see what he himself is in the sight of his loving lord. And I know well that when these two things are wisely and truly seen, we shall gain rest and peace, here in part and the fulness in the bliss of heaven, by God's plentiful grace.

And this was a beginning of the teaching which I saw at the same time, whereby I might come to know in what manner he looks on us in our sin. And then I saw that only pain blames and punishes, and our courteous Lord comforts and succours, and always he is kindly disposed to the soul, loving and longing to bring us to his bliss.

The place which the lord sat on was unadorned, on the ground, barren and waste, alone in the wilderness. His clothing was wide and ample and very handsome, as befits a lord. The colour of the clothing was azure blue, most dignified and beautiful. His demeanour was merciful, his face was a lovely pale brown with a very seemly countenance, his eyes were black, most beautiful and seemly, revealing all his loving pity, and within him there was a secure[237] place of refuge, long and broad, all full of endless heavenliness. And the loving regard which he kept constantly on his servant, and especially when he fell, it seemed to me that it could melt our hearts for love and break them in two for joy. This lovely regard had in it a beautiful mingling which was wonderful to see. Part was compassion and pity, part was joy and bliss. The joy and bliss surpass the compassion and pity, as far as heaven is above earth. The pity was earthly and the bliss was heavenly.

The compassion and the pity of the Father were for Adam, who is his most beloved creature. The joy and the bliss were for the falling of his dearly beloved Son, who is equal with the Father. The merciful regard of his lovely countenance filled all the earth, and went down with Adam into hell, and by this continuing pity Adam was kept from endless death. And this mercy and pity abides with mankind

237. Literally, 'high'.

until the time that we come up to heaven. But man is blinded in this life, and therefore we cannot see our Father, God, as he is. And when he of his goodness wishes to show himself to man, he shows himself familiar, like a man, even though I saw truly that we ought to know and believe that the Father is not man. But his sitting on the ground, barren and waste, signifies this: He made man's soul to be his own city and his dwelling place, which is the most pleasing to him of all his works. And when man had fallen into sorrow and pain, he was not wholly proper to serve in that noble office, and therefore our kind Father did not wish to prepare any other place, but sat upon the ground, awaiting human nature, which is mixed with earth, until the time when by his grace his beloved Son had brought back his city into its noble place of beauty by his hard labour.

The blueness of the clothing signifies his steadfastness; the brownness of his fair face with the lovely blackness of the eyes was most suitable to indicate his holy solemnity; the amplitude, billowing[238] splendidly all about him, signifies that he has enclosed within himself all heavens and all endless joy and bliss; and this was shown in a brief moment, when I perceived that my understanding was directed to the lord. In this I saw him greatly rejoice over the honourable restoration to which he wants to bring and will bring his servant by his great and plentiful grace. And still I was amazed, contemplating the lord and the servant as I have said.

I saw the lord sitting in state, and the servant standing respectfully before his lord, and in this servant there is a double significance, one outward, the other inward. Outwardly he was simply dressed like a labourer prepared to work, and he stood very close to the lord, not immediately in front of him but a little to one side, and that on the left;

238. 'Flammyng' (P), 'flaming' (C), 'flamand' (SS); the word might also mean 'shining', or all the readings may be corrupt.

his clothing was a white tunic, scanty, old and all worn, dyed with the sweat of his body, tight fitting and short, as it were a hand's breadth below his knee, looking threadbare as if it would soon be worn out, ready to go to rags and to tear. And in this I was much amazed, thinking: This is not fitting clothing for a servant so greatly loved to stand in before so honourable a lord. And, inwardly, there was shown in him a foundation of love, the love which he had for the lord, which was equal to the love which the lord had for him. The wisdom of the servant saw inwardly that there was one thing to do which would pay honour to the lord; and the servant, for love, having no regard for himself or for anything which might happen to him, went off in great haste and ran when his lord sent him, to do the thing which was his will and to his honour; for it seemed by his outer garment as if he had been a constant labourer and a hard traveller[239] for a long time. And by the inward perception which I had of both the lord and the servant, it seemed that he was newly appointed, that is to say just beginning to labour, and that this servant had never been sent out before.

There was a treasure in the earth which the lord loved. I was astonished, and considered what it could be; and I was answered in my understanding: It is a food which is delicious and pleasing to the lord. For I saw the lord sitting like a man, and I saw neither food nor drink with which to serve him. This was one astonishment; another astonishment was that this stately lord had only one servant, and him he sent out. I watched, wondering what kind of labour it could be that the servant was to do. And then I understood that he was to do the greatest labour and the hardest work there is. He was to be a gardener, digging and ditching and sweating and turning the soil over and over, and to dig deep down, and to water the plants at the proper time. And he was to persevere in his work, and make sweet streams to run, and

239. On the *double entendre* here, see *Showings*, II, 529 note 182.

fine and plenteous[240] fruit to grow, which he was to bring before the lord and serve him with to his liking. And he was never to come back again until he had made all this food ready as he knew was pleasing to the lord; and then he was to take this food, and drink, and carry it most reverently before the lord. And all this time the lord was to sit in exactly the same place, waiting for the servant whom he had sent out.

And still I wondered where the servant came from, for I saw in the lord that he has in himself endless life and every kind of goodness, except for the treasure which was in the earth, and that was founded in the lord in a marvellous depth of endless love. But it was not wholly to his honour until his servant had prepared it so finely and carried it before him into the lord's own presence. And except for the lord, there was nothing at all but wilderness; and I did not understand everything which this example meant. And therefore I wondered where the servant came from.

In the servant is comprehended[241] the second person of the Trinity, and in the servant is comprehended Adam, that is to say all men. And therefore when I say 'the Son', that means the divinity which is equal to the Father, and when I say 'the servant', that means Christ's humanity, which is the true Adam. By the closeness of the servant is understood the Son, and by his standing to the left is understood Adam. The lord is God the Father, the servant is the Son, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is the equal love which is in them both. When Adam fell, God's Son fell; because of the true union which was made in heaven, God's Son could not be separated from Adam, for by Adam I understand all mankind. Adam fell from life to death, into the valley of this wretched world, and after that into hell. God's Son fell with

240. So SS; P, C: 'fine plentiousness'.

241. Julian appears to use 'comprehend' in the same ambiguous sense which is found in John 1.5, to suggest both 'include, surround' and 'understand'.

Adam, into the valley of the womb of the maiden who was the fairest daughter of Adam, and that was to excuse Adam from blame in heaven and on earth; and powerfully he brought him out of hell. By the wisdom and the goodness which were in the servant is understood God's Son, by the poor labourer's clothing and the standing close by on the left is understood Adam's humanity with all the harm and weakness which follow. For in all this our good Lord showed his own Son and Adam as only one man. The strength and the goodness that we have is from Jesus Christ, the weakness and blindness that we have is from Adam, which two were shown in the servant.

And so has our good Lord Jesus taken upon him all our blame; and therefore our Father may not, does not wish to assign more blame to us than to his own beloved Son Jesus Christ. So he was the servant before he came on earth, standing ready in purpose before the Father until the time when he would send him to do the glorious deed by which mankind was brought back to heaven. That is to say, even though he is God, equal with the Father as regards his divinity, but with his prescient purpose that he would become man to save mankind in fulfillment of the will of his Father, so he stood before his Father as a servant, willingly taking upon him all our charge[242]. And then he rushed off very readily at the Father's bidding, and soon he fell very low into the maiden's womb, having no regard for himself or for his cruel pains.

The white tunic is his flesh, the scantiness signifies that there was nothing at all separating the divinity from the humanity. The tight fit is poverty, the age is Adam's wearing, the wornness is the sweat of Adam's labour, the shortness shows the servant-labourer.

And so I saw the Son stand, saying in intention: See,

242. Again, the word is calculatedly ambiguous, and seems to suggest 'burden', 'cost', 'responsibility'.

my dear Father, I stand before you in Adam's tunic, all ready to hasten and run. I wish to be on earth to your glory, when it is your will to send me. How long shall I desire it? Very truly the Son knew when was the Father's will, and how long he would desire it, that is to say as regards his divinity, for he is the wisdom of the Father. Therefore this meaning was shown for understanding of Christ's humanity. For all mankind which will be saved by the sweet Incarnation and the Passion of Christ, all is Christ's humanity, for he is the head, and we are his members, to which members the day and the time are unknown when every passing woe and sorrow will have an end, and everlasting joy and bliss will be fulfilled, which day and time all the company of heaven longs and[243] desires to see. And all who are under heaven and will come there, their way is by longing and desiring, which desiring and longing was shown in the servant standing before the lord, or, otherwise, in the Son standing before the Father in Adam's tunic. For the longing and desire of all mankind which will be saved appeared in Jesus, for Jesus is in all who will be saved, and all who will be saved[244] are in Jesus, and all is of the love of God, with obedience, meekness and patience, and the virtues which befit us.

Also in this marvellous example I have teaching within me, as it were the beginning of an ABC, whereby I may have some understanding of our Lord's meaning, for the mysteries of the revelation are hidden in it, even though all the showings are full of mysteries.

The sitting of the Father symbolizes the divinity, that is to say to reveal rest and peace, for in the divinity there can be no labour; and that he shows himself as a lord symbolizes our humanity. The standing of the servant symbolizes labour, and that he stands to the left symbolizes that he was

243. So C; P: 'or'; om. SS: 'and desires'.
244. So SS, which seem superior to P, C: 'are saved'.

not fully worthy to stand immediately in front of the lord. His rushing away was the divinity, and his running was the humanity; for the divinity rushed from the Father into the maiden's womb, falling to accept our nature, and in this falling he took great hurt. The hurt that he took was our flesh, in which at once he experienced mortal pains. That he stood fearfully before the lord and not immediately in front symbolizes that his clothing was not seemly for him to stand in immediately in front of the lord, nor could nor should that be his office whilst he was a labourer; nor, further, might he sit with the lord in rest and peace until he had duly won his peace with his hard labour; and that he stood to the left symbolizes that the Father by his will permitted his own Son in human nature to suffer all man's pain without sparing him. By his tunic being ready to go to rags and to tear is understood the rods and the scourges, the thorns and the nails, the pulling and the dragging and the tearing of his tender flesh, of which I had seen a part. The flesh was torn from the skull, falling in pieces until when the bleeding stopped; and then it began to dry again, adhering to the bone. And by the tossing about and writhing, the groaning and moaning, is understood that he could never with almighty power rise from the time that he fell into the maiden's womb until his body was slain and dead, and he had yielded his soul into the Father's hand, with all mankind for whom he had been sent.

And at this moment he first began to show his power, for then he went down into hell; and when he was there, he raised up the great root out of the deep depth[245], which rightly was joined to him in heaven. The body lay in the grave until Easter[246] morning; and from that time it never lay again. For then the tossing about and writhing, the

245. For the Scriptural allusions and the rhetorical devices here, see *Showings*, II, 542 notes 301 and 302.

246. So C, SS; P: 'after'.

groaning and the moaning[247] ended, rightly; and our foul mortal flesh, which God's Son took upon him, which was Adam's old tunic, tight-fitting, threadbare and short, was then made lovely by our saviour, new, white and bright and forever clean, wide and ample, fairer[248] and richer than the clothing which I saw on the Father. For that clothing was blue, and Christ's clothing is now of a fair and seemly mixture, which is so marvellous that I cannot describe it, for it is all of true glory.

Now the lord does not sit on the ground in the wilderness, but in his rich and noblest[249] seat, which he made in heaven most to his liking. Now the Son does not stand before the Father as a servant before the lord, pitifully clothed, partly naked, but he stands immediately before the Father, richly clothed in joyful amplitude, with a rich and precious crown upon his head. For it was revealed that we are his crown[250], which crown is the Father's joy, the Son's honour, the Holy Spirit's delight, and endless marvellous bliss to all who are in heaven.

Now the Son does not stand before the Father on the left like a labourer, but he sits at the Father's right hand in endless rest and peace. But this does not mean that the Son sits on the right hand side as one man sits beside another in this life, for there is no such sitting, as I see it, in the Trinity; but he sits at his Father's right hand, that is to say right in the highest nobility of the Father's joy. Now the spouse, God's son, is at peace with his beloved wife, who is the fair maiden of endless joy. Now the Son, true God and true man, sits in his city in rest and in peace, which his Father has prepared for him by his endless purpose, and the Father in the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Father and in the Son.

247. So SS; P, C: 'morning' (or 'mourning').
248. So C, SS; P: 'fair'.
249. So SS; P, C: 'noble'.
250. See 216, 230.